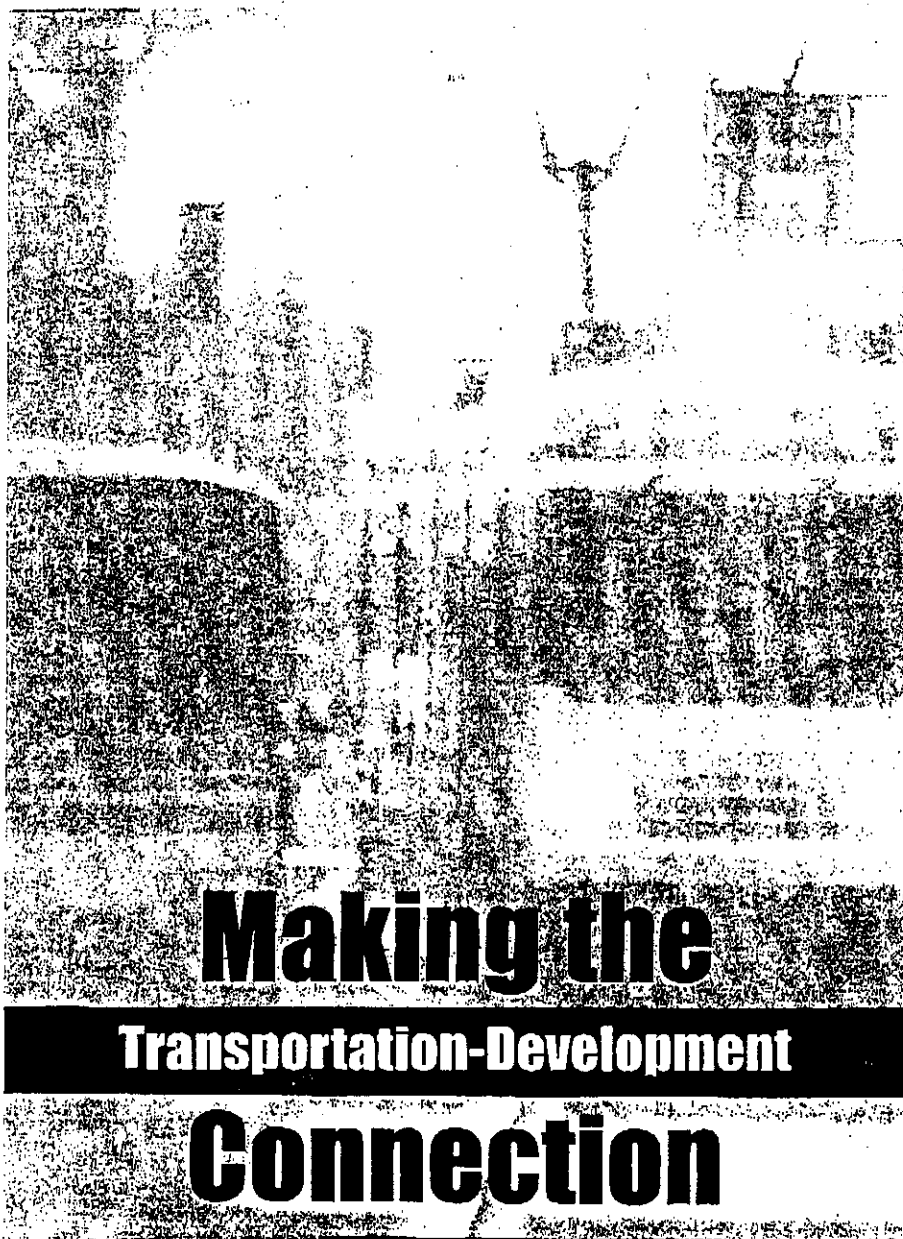


NT Downtown News Briefs

International Downtown Association

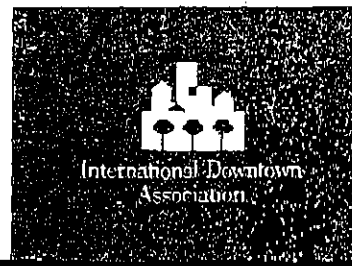
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Making the Transportation-Development Connection

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Cover Story

Making the Transportation-Development Connection

By Betsy Jackson, President, The Urban Agenda, Washington, DC

Can't live with it, can't live without it

Downtown as a destination cannot be separated from downtown as a transportation hub. Whether it's downtown's historical role as the center of commerce, or its emerging role as a vibrant live-work-play alternative, the significance of access in, out, and through the CBD is undeniable. And the transportation decisions of the '50s, '60s, and '70s contributed to the near-demise of center cities, as interstate highways bisected downtowns and carried businesses, employees, and customers to the suburbs.

For years, downtown development organizations focused on parking in the belief that providing more and more of it would bring the suburban shopper or office worker back to the city. Now, downtown management groups are embracing transportation choice as an essential element of downtown revitalization.

Infrastructure and downtown management

As downtowns become economically viable, the next challenge lies in *infrastructure*. With everything from high-speed telecommunications to replacement of 100-year-old water, sewer, and electrical service, downtown leaders face infrastructure needs that transcend their control. Downtown organizations have succeeded in the past by drawing a line around a geographical area and applying an integrated system of management, marketing, planning, and development strategies within that boundary. But what of systems that extend beyond the CBD, systems that are controlled by municipal, county, regional, state, and even federal entities? How do downtown management organizations insert themselves into this environment and carve out a solution that keeps downtown's transportation priorities on the table?



THE URBAN AGENDA

DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATIONS WITH TMOs

Bellevue Downtown Association
www.bellevuedowntown.org

Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.
www.bethesda.org

Buckhead Coalition, Inc.

Buffalo Place Inc.
www.buffaloplace.com

Center City District
www.centercityphila.org

Central Atlanta Progress
www.atlantadowntown.org

Central Dallas Association
www.downtowndallas.org

Central Houston, Inc.
www.centralhouston.org

Central London Partnership
www.c-london.co.uk

Charlotte Center City Partners
www.charlottecentercity.org

Downtown Denver Partnership, Inc.
www.downtowndenver.com

Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.
www.dfw.org

Dublin City Business Association
www.dcba.ie

Georgetown Business
Improvement District
www.georgetowndc.com

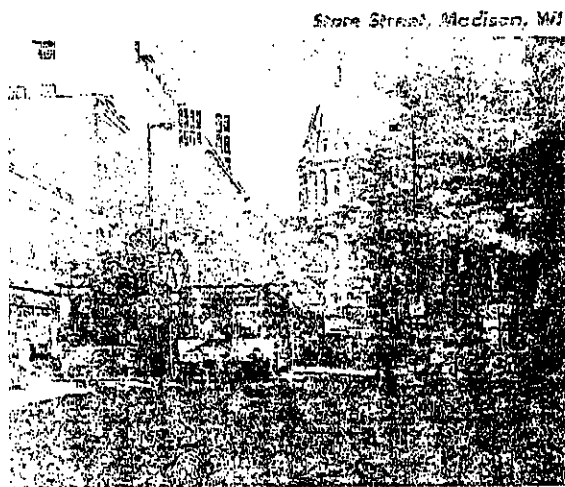
Main Street Meridian
www.meridianms.org

Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership
www.downtownpittsburgh.com

St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership, Inc.
www.stpetpartnership.org

Tampa Downtown Partnership
www.tampadowntown.com

The Downtown Business Alliance
Of Provo, Inc.
www.provodowntown.com



State Street, Madison, WI

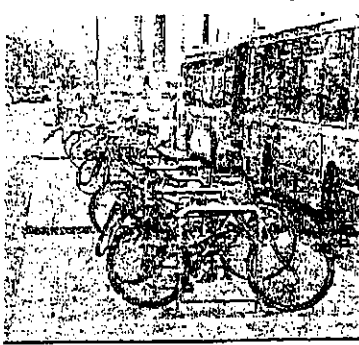
Millennium Bridge, London, England



THE URBAN AGENDA

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Kensington High Street,
London, England



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Managing transportation choice

Everything is about choice. With unprecedented levels of mobility, people are making work, housing, schools, recreation, and cultural choices based on where they want to be, not where they have ended up. If downtowns are to achieve "24/7" status, they must provide not only options in housing, entertainment, work, and recreation, but also options in access to these amenities. That means downtown organizations must participate in managing a system that includes automobile access, public transit, commuter transportation, pedestrian mobility and safety, and bicycle access. Gone are the days when a downtown can assess its transportation infrastructure by the number of occupied short-term parking spaces.

How do downtown management organizations get involved in providing transportation choice? By researching the need, creating and managing effective programs, and advocating for appropriate public investment.

REAUTHORIZING THE FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL: UPDATE ON SAFETEA

Unable to meet the September 30 deadline for reauthorization of the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), Congress granted itself a five-month extension until February 29, 2004. Since then, both House and Senate Committees have been working on their separate reauthorization plans, as follows:

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee issued S.1072 – its proposed \$255 billion reauthorization of the six-year transportation bill. Stakeholder groups, including the **International Downtown Association**, were successful in encouraging several important amendments to the proposal.

- The current state-to-local share of funds under the Surface Transportation Program was retained at 37.5% to the states and 62.5% to local jurisdictions. Earlier versions proposed changing the ratio to 44.5% to states and 55.5% to local jurisdictions.
- Reinstating the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program as a stand-alone program capitalized at \$50 million, with funds awarded on a national, competitive basis. Previous proposals intended to reduce the funding to approximately \$30 million, distributing \$500,000 per state and \$4 million for the national program.
- Increasing funding levels for planning funds for metropolitan areas from one percent of total funding, to 1.5 percent.
- Increasing funding for Safe Routes to Schools from \$50 million to \$70 million.

Additionally, pressure from interest groups killed a proposed amendment that would have removed or reduced the authority of communities to review transportation projects for their impacts on local historic resources. Known as Section 4(f), language to amend was not included in the bill voted out of committee.

The Senate EPW bill will be merged with bills yet to be released for the revenue and transit provisions under the control of other Senate Committees, including the powerful Senate Banking Committee. Action on merging the bills will not take place until 2004.

On the House side, a bill is expected from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in mid-to-late November. T&I Committee Chairman Don Young (R-AK) had announced earlier that his committee's bill will seek \$375 billion for the six-year reauthorization – \$128 billion higher than the Bush Administration's proposal, and \$64 billion higher than the estimated Senate total of \$311 billion.

IDA will continue to track the progress of reauthorization. Look for updates on the IDA website – www.ida-downtown.org.

Researching the need

There are at least eight areas for research when developing an integrated transportation network. Each requires an analysis of current supply, performance, and management; projected demand, planning, and locational impacts; gaps in supply and management; and current sources and uses of funds.

- **Traffic circulation and management** – Mapping current vehicular traffic patterns around downtown; identifying where and when bottlenecks occur; and clarifying how the system is currently managed...especially when it breaks down.
- **Parking** – Mapping existing supply of on-street, off-street, public, and private parking, including space sizes, fees, hours, and penalties; surveying valet parking establishments and parking locations; identifying enforcement rules and realities and plotting enforcement problems; locating peak usage and nearby oversupply; and calculating gross economic impact of current parking supply.
- **Transit** – Itemizing the types of public and private-sector transit alternatives; assessing the quality of the physical inventory, including rolling stock, shelters and stops, and signage; analyzing schedules for frequency, on-time performance, and usage; assessing locations of stops and shelters relative to employment concentration, visitor destinations, and residences; conducting inventories of existing commercial development around stops and shelters; and collecting examples of current marketing and advertising efforts to promote transit.
- **Pedestrian flow and management** – Conducting "footfall" counts; analyzing quality of sidewalks and quantity/quality of crosswalks; assessing traffic signalization and pedestrian crossing times; conducting inventories of sidewalk, intersection, and crosswalk lighting; and plotting locations of pedestrian accidents.
- **Cyclists** – Developing an inventory of bike messenger companies' fleets; mapping bike lanes and existing bike racks (and their condition); analyzing current bicycle ordinances, penalties, and enforcement; and surveying the current number of bike commuters and common routes.
- **Public space** – Analyzing the interaction of transportation modes, including how pedestrians and bicyclists share the sidewalks, where buses idle between departures, and how freight deliveries interfere with sidewalks, parking, alleyways, and crosswalks.
- **Ingress and egress** – Mapping arterial entrances/exits and exits; analyzing them in relation to pedestrian concentrations, residential areas, and anticipated new development; assessing quality; and identifying enforcement rules and realities.
- **Residential development** – Surveying existing residential transportation demands and projecting the impact of planned residential development on the current system.

Creating roles for the downtown organization

Armed with the facts about the current supply, condition, and operation of the transportation network, downtown organizations can play important roles in improving the system:

- **Transportation management organizations** – TMOs have been created to allow government to subcontract certain activities associated with transit operations. Many downtown organizations (see sidebar) are taking on the TMO role in their communities, with activities including promotion; managing and enforcing parking in city-owned parking lots and structures; serving as the sales office for parking and transit passes; and managing public-sector ridesharing and vanpooling operations.
- **Public space planning, design, and management** – Most downtown organizations are involved to some degree in the planning and design of downtown open space. These organizations can add value to streets and parks by suggesting improvements to intermodal connections, circulation, wayfinding, public space maintenance – including bus stops and shelters – and by supporting new information technologies that help direct drivers to parking, alternative routes, and the like.
- **Transit-oriented development** – Mixed-use projects that connect to transit are proving to be a growth market in many suburbs; connecting new development in the CBD to an improved transportation network can give downtown a competitive advantage. Downtown management organizations can help by crafting incentives that encourage developers to build with transit in mind. Incentives include transfers of development rights, density bonuses, and reductions in parking requirements. While the organization cannot enact the incentives, it does have the credibility to develop the ideas and advocate for their creation by government.
- **Location-efficient mortgages** – Likewise, downtown organizations can work to promote the creation of what are known as location-efficient mortgages. These mortgages allow people buying homes near transit routes to include the savings associated with riding public transportation into their qualifying income. Supported by Fannie Mae and local banks, this incentive program is currently operating in more than ten communities ranging from Philadelphia and Seattle, to El Paso, TX and Burlington, VT. This could be a very valuable tool in marketing downtown housing to a wider variety of buyers (see sidebar).
- **Tax incentives for ridesharing and transit passes** – Downtown organizations are promoting the existence of tax breaks offered to employers who provide ridesharing services or underwrite transit costs as employee benefits. Encouraging more employers to offer these services helps reduce the demand for expensive downtown parking and expands the population using public transit.
- **Custom transportation services** – Downtown organizations often extend their ambassador staff for special projects. Some use ambassadors to supplement traffic management during rush hour or special events, or offer late-night escort service for downtown employees going to transit or parking facilities, particularly satellite parking areas.
- **Circulator bus systems** – Other downtown organizations develop or manage low-cost or free circulator buses in the downtown area. These buses reduce the use of autos during the day and encourage downtown employees and visitors to explore more of the area.

Advocating for choice

Changing the transportation system is exceedingly complex. Transportation decision-making takes place on a very large playing field, not limited to local and county governments, but involving MPOs (metropolitan planning organizations), state departments of transportation, federal agencies, and congressional committees. However, downtown development leaders are in a good position to influence transportation planning, policy, and funding by delivering business support rarely mobilized around issues of transportation. Downtown organizations need to:

- **Have a seat at the regional transportation-planning table** – Downtown development interests need to be represented in regional transportation planning. Board-level participation may be limited to local governments, but working committees should provide an opportunity for the business community to get involved.
- **Support the public participation process** – Transportation planning requires public input. Downtown organizations can host one or more of these public participation workshops in the district and help shape the plan.
- **Lobby at the statehouse and on Capitol Hill** – The business community has sway with elected leaders that other interest groups do not. The more informed downtown organizations become, the more they will form policy priorities and lobby for them. While some downtown organizations are prohibited from lobbying local government, they may be able to advocate at the state and national levels. If limitations do exist, individual business leaders can be prepped to carry the standard on behalf of downtown.
- **Promote what the downtown organization can do** – Along with planning and policy, downtown groups can partner with transportation authorities and MPOs to promote and manage the system. Most of the projects described earlier were created through partnership agreements and existing resources...not legislation.
- **Advocate for integrated management** – Too often, regional transportation networks are fragmented, poorly coordinated, or inefficiently managed. The downtown business community can promote more coordinated, cross-jurisdictional governance and help broker better partner relationships.

What's on the horizon?

More than ever, decisions made on the regional level will have significant impact on downtown's future. It is certainly true in transportation development, funding, and management. Twenty years ago, downtown management organizations had neither the experience nor the influence to affect transportation decisions. But today, downtown groups and their leaders have the talent, credibility, and insight to affect the future of transportation. Now is the time to guarantee that transportation infrastructure works for downtown, not against it.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Location-efficient mortgages:
Federal National Mortgage
Association (Fannie Mae)
Michelle Desiderio
(202) 752-4041

Jim Taylor
(202) 752-4085
www.eFannieMae.com

Business support of transit:
National Business Coalition
for Rapid Transit
Steve Schlickman
steveschl@aol.com

**Transportation policy and
transit-oriented development:**
Reconnecting America
Hank Dittmar
www.reconnectingamerica.org

